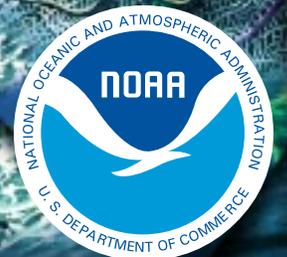


National Ocean Service

NOS Strategic Plan 1999 – 2004

August 1998



U. S. Department of Commerce
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
National Ocean Service

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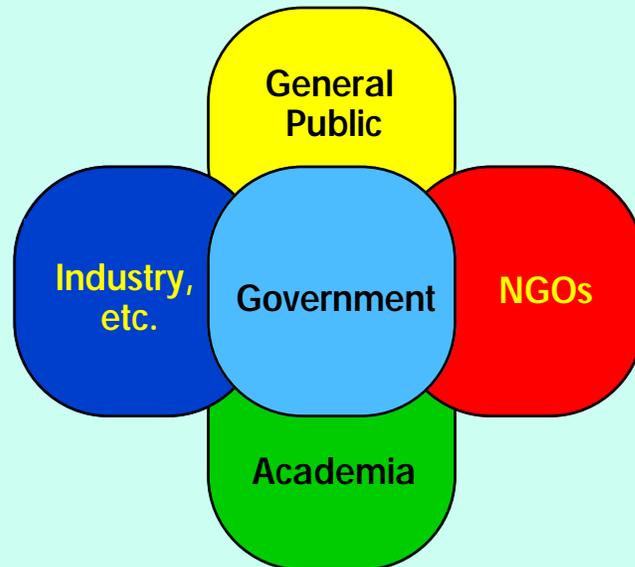
*The NOS leadership role in Coastal Stewardship as described in **this plan** provides a new and more focused approach to bridging the gap between science, management, and public policy. It requires us to act locally, regionally, nationally and internationally on problems and issues of concern, many of which transcend political boundaries. Bridges and partnerships must be forged by integrating and coordinating with, and thus empowering, coastal stewards at all levels of government as well as in the private sector.*

The breadth of the NOS plan attests to the broad spectrum of programs and expertise that NOAA can apply to critical problems and issues affecting coastal and ocean resources and communities, thereby fostering a sustainable economy.

August 1998



Building a Foundation of Coastal Stewardship



Working Together to...

Preserve &
Enhance
Ecosystem
Health

Ensure
Economic
Prosperity

What NOS Will Do

Conduct World-Class Science

Strengthen Partnership

Set the National Agenda

Provide a Coastal Stewardship Ethic

Establish National Standards

Provide Products, Services, & Tools

Improve Communication

Influence International Agendas

Preserve Coastal Environments and Resources

Vision, Mission, and Role

*Coastal Stewardship means providing leadership to advance the sustainable use of our coastal systems to support the Nation's environmental well-being and economic prosperity on the public's behalf. A **steward** is someone who manages the property, finances or affairs for the benefit of another. Such leadership requires NOS to integrate its own capabilities with those of the extramural community, actively protect and restore coastal environments in collaboration with others, provide technological and expert assistance to partners, and help others to achieve success in their coastal stewardship responsibilities.*

As we enter the 21st Century, the challenge to the Nation—and to the National Ocean Service (NOS)—is to preserve and enhance our coastal resources and ecosystems while supporting economic growth for the long-term benefit of the Nation. The increasingly complex nature of these issues, and the inherent difficulty in establishing an appropriate balance in a rapidly changing world, require NOS to evolve so that its programs can best address the linkages between coastal stewardship and economic growth. This theme is central to the sustainable development agenda of both the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the U.S. Department of Commerce.

The Vision

In redefining itself to address the coastal stewardship challenges of the next century, NOS has embraced the need to provide the leadership necessary *to influence and change the behavior of others globally and improve* coastal stewardship throughout the Nation.

Individuals and institutions have the tools and information necessary to preserve, protect, and develop the environmental well-being and economic prosperity of the Nation's coastal and ocean resources for this and future generations.

NOS will develop innovative approaches that lead to solutions to emerging issues and problems that support this vision and successfully address current and emerging environmental challenges.

The Mission

To be the Nation's principal advocate for coastal stewardship through partnerships at all levels. To support and provide the science, information, management, and leadership necessary to balance the environmental and economic well-being of the Nation's coastal resources and communities.

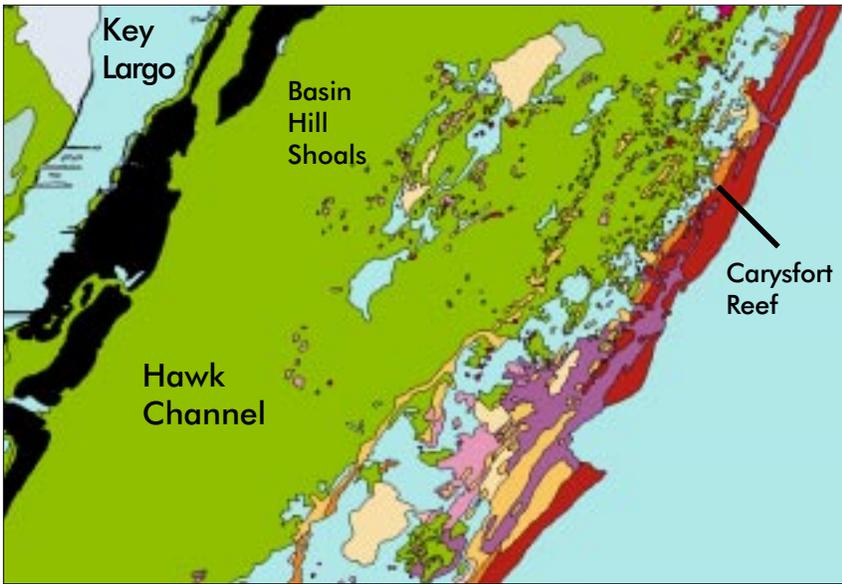
A set of strategic goals and objectives has been established to develop this foundation and to take advantage of opportunities to produce outcomes that support the NOS vision.

NOS Role in Coastal Stewardship

NOS is in a unique position to provide much needed leadership for coastal stewardship as the federal focal point for coastal and oceanic activities. To ensure that a coastal stewardship ethic is embraced by individuals and institutions in all sectors of society, NOS must:

- *Foster partnerships and the balanced participation of others;*
- *Provide the scientific basis and the products and services for stewardship;*
- *Serve as the catalyst for anticipating national needs and requirements;*
- *Provide international leadership; and*
- *Foster the stewardship capabilities of other stakeholders.*

Habitat



NOS is committed to reducing the continued loss and degradation of sensitive coastal habitats, such as the wide variety of coral reef and benthic habitats in the Florida Keys.

Hazards



The term **Coastal** refers to the land and water area extending from the inland boundary of coastal watersheds (those USGS cataloging units that contain the head of tide) to the seaward boundary of the U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone. In the Great Lakes region, this includes those adjacent to the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River.

NOS will continue to play a significant role in implementing the U.S. Department of Commerce's Natural Disaster Reduction Initiative (NDRI).

Goals and Objectives

The NOS Plan's Relationship to the NOAA Strategic Plan

NOS's goals and objectives are an outgrowth and expansion of national, DOC, and NOAA goals and objectives as specified in the NOAA Strategic Plan. The NOS Strategic Plan complements the work conducted by the NOAA strategic planning teams, and provides the foundation for translating into action the performance measures set forth in the Strategic Five-Year Implementation Plans. The NOS Strategic Plan serves to internally strengthen our organization, as well as our relationships with other NOAA Line Offices.

To address the following five interconnected goals, NOS will build on past successes, and expand current efforts, as part of a comprehensive strategy that includes providing international leadership and capacity building at all levels, including for the international community. NOS has the personnel, resources, and capabilities to make measurable progress on each of these goals during the next five years. Furthermore, NOS can bring to bear the resources of partner agencies at the Federal, state and local levels, industry, and international partners to resolve environmental and economic problems affecting the Nation's coasts.

Goal 1: Habitat

Enhance the preservation and restoration of the U.S. coastal and ocean environments.

Objectives:

- 1.1 Increase capabilities, infrastructure, and the role of ecosystem science to reduce the cumulative degradation of coastal habitats and to protect and restore coastal ecosystems.
- 1.2 Improve capabilities and infrastructure to reduce the pollution of coastal waters, improve water quality and enhance beneficial uses.
- 1.3 Improve and promote sustainable management of the Nation's ocean and Great Lakes commercially, recreationally, and ecologically important living marine resources.
- 1.4 Increase the capability and effectiveness of the national system of coastal and ocean management areas.
- 1.5 Increase the ability to predict and assess the impacts of climate change on coastal ecosystems and habitats.

Goal 2: Hazards

Reduce the costs and risks to people, the economy, and natural resources associated from both natural and human-induced hazards, including climate change.

Objectives:

- 2.1 Improve the capabilities and infrastructure of coastal communities to predict and reduce the impacts of hazards.
- 2.2 Enhance the response capabilities of communities and other parties.
- 2.3 Strengthen capabilities and mechanisms to support timely and efficient recovery and restoration efforts of communities.

Goal 3: Navigation

Expand and improve navigation products and services in response to changing technology and the needs of established and new customers.

Objectives:

- 3.1 Increase overall environmental safety as well as the safety of vessel movements on the Nation's waterways, especially in major ports.

Navigation



NOS will continue to develop and improve products and services that enhance the safety and efficiency of maritime activities while protecting the environment.

Coastal Communities



Working with partners to foster sustainable, environmentally sound coastal communities will be a fundamental priority for NOS as we move into the next millennium.

A New Science Emphasis in NOS

Effective coastal stewardship requires reliable, accurate, and timely information and the capability to use that information in policies that ensure the long-term sustainability of our nation's ecosystems, communities, and economies.

To build a strong scientific foundation for coastal stewardship, NOS will:

- *Acquire the fundamental understanding of and ability to predict coastal ecosystem change;*
- *Build integrated and comprehensive science capabilities in NOS; and*
- *Design and deliver results from objective research, monitoring and assessment efforts to NOAA and other constituents.*

To maintain and strengthen these capabilities, NOS will ensure that its science is:

- *Rigorous, objective, credible, and based on peer review;*
- *Built on strong external partnerships; and*
- *Based on open communication among all stakeholders.*

- 3.2 Increase the efficiency of marine, air, and land transportation systems.
- 3.3 Expand and improve public and civil applications of navigation and positioning systems, including increased use by:
 - land use and resource managers;
 - the recreation and tourism industries; and
 - the enforcement community.

Goal 4: Coastal Communities

Increase coastal communities' ability to adapt to changing conditions, resulting in a balance of environmental and economic benefits.

Objectives:

- 4.1 Increase the capabilities of communities to account for the scope, scale, and magnitude of the impacts and interactions between human activities, the economy, and the marine environment.
- 4.2 Promote and expand the "National Dialogue" to address effective means for managing environmental well-being and economic growth at the local, regional, and national scales.
- 4.3 Expand the depth and breadth of, and partnerships within, the coastal stewardship community.
- 4.4 Improve the ability of coastal communities to mitigate the impacts of all natural and human-induced hazards, including climate change.

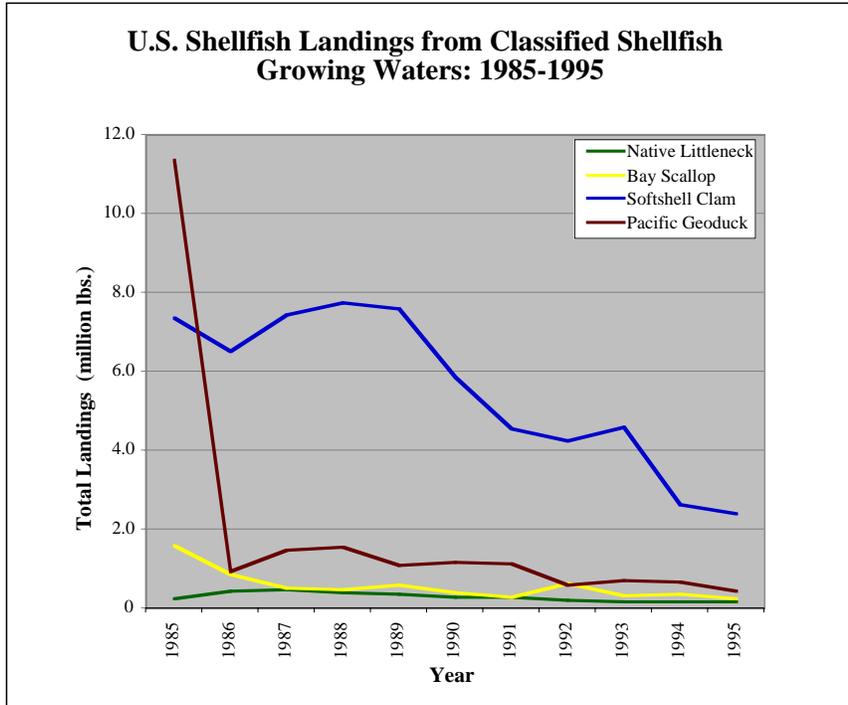
Goal 5: Organization and Culture

Promote the evolution of a more inclusive, internal corporate culture that is results-driven, service-oriented, science-based, responsive and adaptive to change.

Objectives:

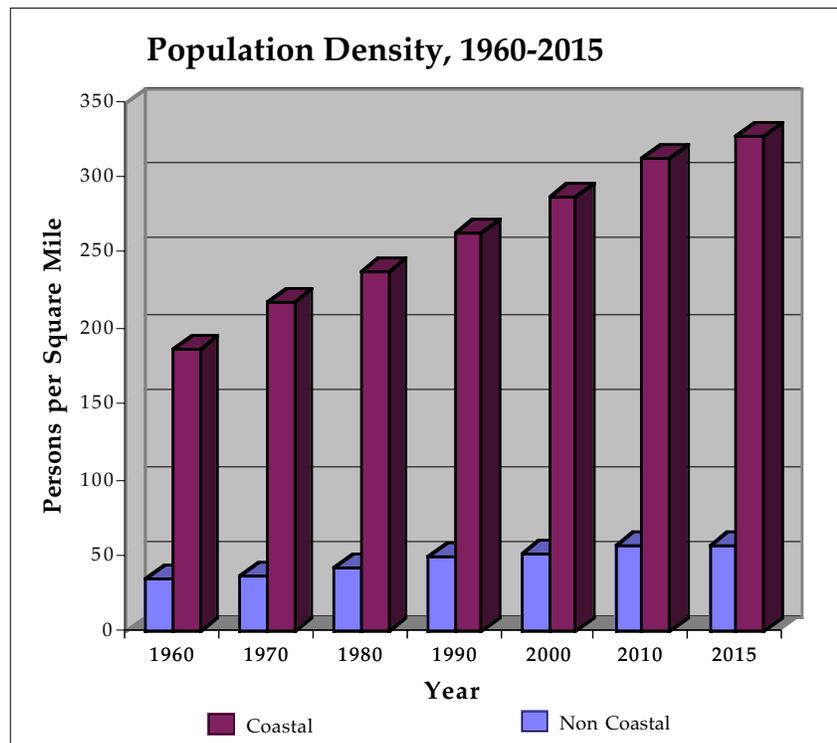
- 5.1 Enhance and develop cross-program teamwork, inter-agency cooperation, and external partnerships.
- 5.2 Enhance the utility, availability, access, and delivery of NOS products and services, both internally and externally, at national, regional and local levels.
- 5.3 Improve planning and performance measurement systems to ensure the quality and relevance of NOS efforts.
- 5.4 Implement incentives to cultivate creativity, innovation, autonomy, and adaptability to change in employees at all levels (e.g., increase delegation of responsibility, mentoring, training, management).
- 5.5 Improve infrastructure and systems to support the delivery of products and services.
- 5.6 Develop and maintain scientific expertise while supporting internal and external research, monitoring and assessments.

Natural Environment



The landings of many species of fish and shellfish have declined dramatically nationwide over the last few decades from changing environmental conditions.

Changing Demographics



Population density has increased, and will continue to increase, far more rapidly in coastal areas than in the U.S. interior.

Operating Environment

A Dynamic Environment

Our Nation's coastal areas and their natural resources are changing at an increasing rate. Environmental degradation impacts the economy, human health and ecosystem integrity. This is evidenced by restricted shellfish harvests, loss of commercially valuable species, and beach closures that reduce tourism.

All public and private entities must consider the overall environment in which they operate. Ultimately, the way in which they factor changing conditions into their operations determines the extent of their success. It is generally difficult for government organizations to adapt to changes in their operating environment. Consequently, it is most important for government organizations to remain aware of ongoing changes in their operating environment. The environment in which NOS operates is changing rapidly, virtually “across the board.” NOS must adapt to this changing environment.

■ Natural Environment

As the 20th century comes to a close, it is increasingly clear that the quality of our coasts and coastal ecosystems has continued to decline despite the significant investments the Nation has made during the past three decades. In addition to natural processes such as erosion, land subsidence, storm surges, and hurricanes, chronic problems associated with intensive human use continue to have a heavy impact on coastal resources. These impacts require us to reconsider our demands for, and uses of, the coast and its resources to ensure that they are maintained and conserved for future generations. Declining environmental conditions are exemplified by:

- Continued loss of critical habitat, such as wetlands, mangrove forests, seagrasses, and coral reefs;
- Decreases in the composition and abundance of many Great Lakes, coastal, and marine species;
- High concentrations of toxic contaminants in sediments, species and the water column;
- Increasing occurrence of harmful algal blooms;
- More and increasingly severe episodes of hypoxia; and
- Accidental or intentional introduction of invasive species.

■ Changing Demographics

Our coastal areas are currently experiencing an increase in population and its related impacts; this trend will continue for the foreseeable future. More than 139 million people, approximately 53% of the U.S. population, live in coastal areas. As demands for development and recreation collide within these geographically-limited areas, conflicting uses occur. Human-induced damages often exacerbate problems (e.g., erosion worsens as a result of development activities). The growing coastal population can be characterized as:

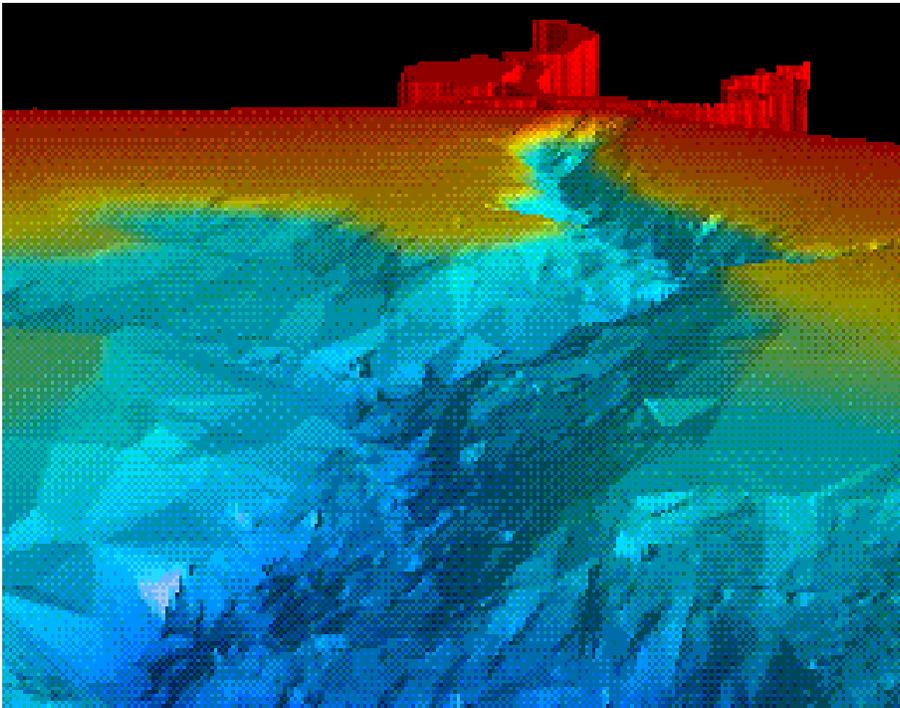
- An increasingly educated and diverse population;
- An aging populace with more leisure time and disposable income; and
- Having high expectations for quality products and services.

Social Change and a Growing Economy



The broad social, economic, and ethnic mix of people living and using the coasts and coastal resources makes decision-making complex. The 1980s were a period of rapid economic growth for many coastal areas of the United States.

Advances in Technology



The demand for detailed and timely data to support new technologies, such as GPS, is growing in all sectors of society.

■ Growing Economy

The U.S. economy is more closely linked to international markets than ever before. Thus, concerns for nonrenewable resources are part of a larger, global economic perspective. As our coasts experience rapidly changing conditions, it is important to recognize the relationship between the environment and the economy. How will increasing constraints to preserve coastal environments affect local and regional economies? Aspects of the coastal economy include:

- Increasing demands and user conflicts over a limited coastal resource base;
- Tourism/recreation as an increasingly important economic sector;
- Increased maritime activity that makes ports and dredging issues a priority concern; and
- A collapse of the fishing industry in many areas as a priority concern.

■ Social Change

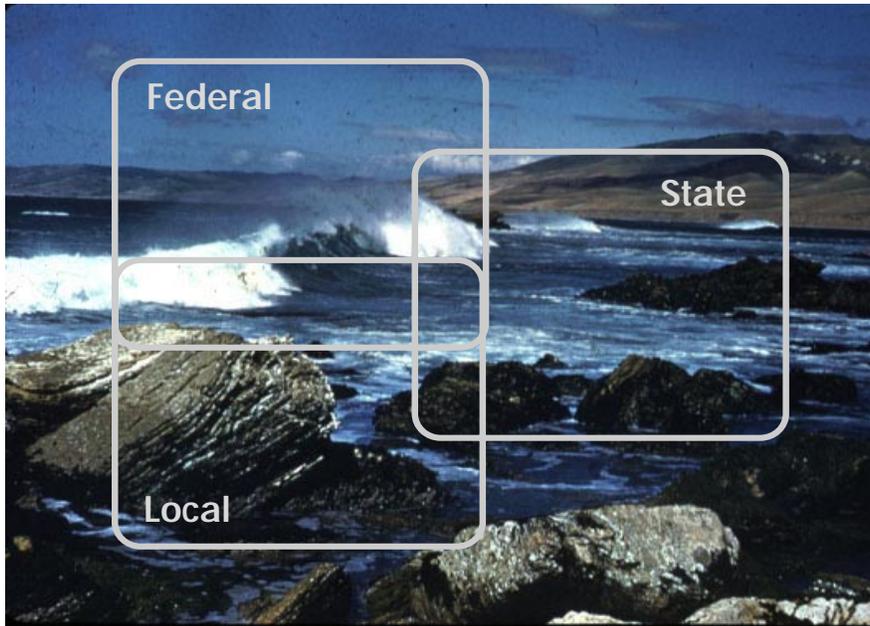
As we approach the 21st century, our society is experiencing an unprecedented degree of change. In essence, the trend *is* change, and with it come consequences both beneficial and deleterious. These fundamental changes, and their effect on the “business” of government products and services, are a principal concern of local, regional, and Federal government agencies. Therefore, it is important for these entities to possess an understanding of the ways in which society is changing, of the diversity of interests, and of competing goals and objectives. Otherwise, they may lose their ability to find solutions to pressing problems. Examples of social change, both positive and negative, include:

- An increase in the use of litigation to resolve problems;
- Increasing dependency on technology;
- Heightened public awareness and interest in environmental concerns;
- More willingness to participate as partners in problem-solving efforts; and
- Changing social values (e.g., education, family).

■ Advances in Science and Technology

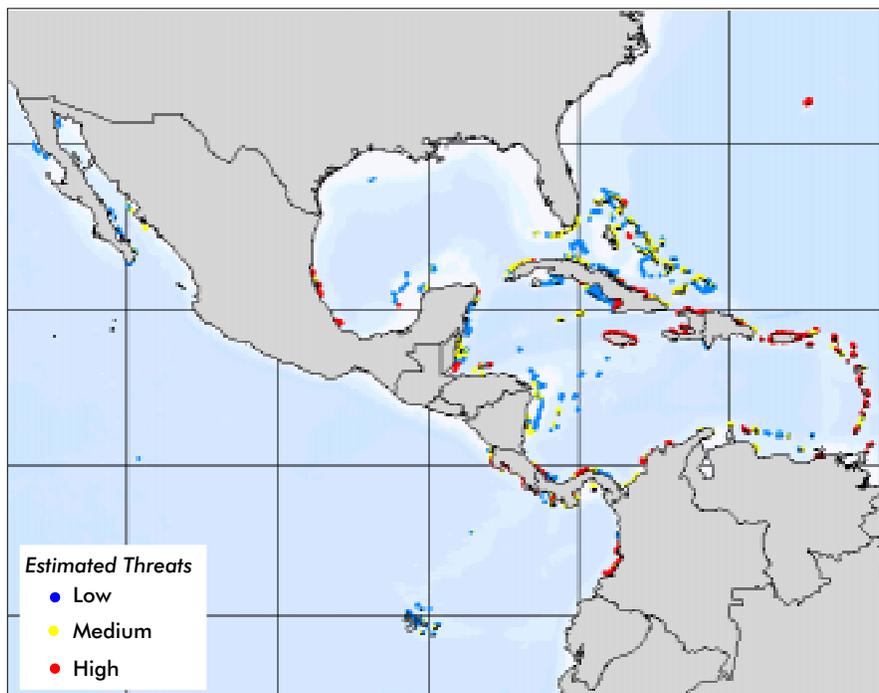
Scientific understanding and technology are two of the strongest factors driving change today. Advances are occurring at an unprecedented rate in many fields (e.g., communications, computer applications, remote sensing). While this gives us an advantage in understanding and resolving problems, changes are sometimes implemented before their potential effects are fully understood. As an example, the Internet has dramatically increased the availability of information. At the same time, however, the “Information Superhighway” often makes it difficult to determine the quality and applicability of the information. Other key considerations related to technological advances include:

Changing Institutional Roles



Interaction between federal, state, and local government is becoming more complex. Clear roles and responsibilities are essential if coastal issues are to be effectively addressed.

International Issues



Coral reefs of the tropical Americas classified by potential threat from human activities (Source: World Resources Institute)

The Compelling Case for Change at NOS

NOS has the opportunity to serve as the focal point for NOAA's efforts to promote a coastal stewardship ethic in the United States. NOS must:

Become more adaptable by:

- *Responding to traditional and new users' changing demands for products and services;*
- *Maintaining a broad scientific research base to understand and evaluate changes in coastal systems;*
- *Responding to changing socioeconomic and environmental conditions.*

Become more active by:

- *Taking advantage of new opportunities;*
- *Aggressively realigning programs and creating new alliances;*
- *Creatively using resources to maximize our unique capabilities;*
- *Aggressively pursuing innovative, high quality coastal science; and*
- *Strengthening implementation of its responsibilities to protect and restore coastal environments, and taking advantage of legislative initiatives.*

- An increase in the use of Global Positioning Systems (GPS) Geographic Information Systems (GIS), remote sensing and biotechnology to identify and resolve problems;
- Increased public demand and expectations for information and services;
- A higher potential for incompatibility problems;
- Greater complexity in the application of science and technology to enhance decisions; and
- More reliance on science- and technology-based solutions.

Changing Institutional Roles

A host of Federal, state, and local government agencies are implementing nearly all of the key environmental laws enacted during the past 30 years—quite often with direct input from a variety of stakeholders. As an example, two federal agencies, 32 state agencies, and a host of local governments are implementing the Coastal Zone Management Act. The discrete roles and responsibilities of individual organizations are harder to determine. Consequently, it is getting harder for the general public to know where to go for information. Key trends include:

- Concern about institutional effectiveness and efficiency;
- Increasing use of ecosystem and adaptive management models;
- Public/media scrutiny;
- Complex decision-making processes; and
- An emphasis on establishing partnerships, including an increasing reliance on contractors to provide public services.

International Issues

From the 1972 Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm, to the Earth Summit of 1992 in Rio de Janeiro and the 1997 Convention on Climate Change in Kyoto, the world continues to struggle with the question: Can management keep pace with profound changes in the global environment? Examples of large-scale trends that are cause for concern include:

- Loss of habitat, species, and biodiversity;
- Climate change;
- Increased pollution of coastal waters, primarily from land-based activities; and
- World population growth and increased resource use.

Consequently, NOS recognizes the need to:

- Integrate international standards, practices, and programs;
- Encourage improved scientific understanding and monitoring of coastal systems internationally;
- Promote the application of integrated coastal management; and
- Improve partnerships between developed and developing nations.

Coastal Stewardship



Invoking a coastal stewardship ethic involves reaching out to a diverse community of users, as well as educating our future stewards.

Organizational Change

The organizational change at NOS is a gradual, planned process that takes advantage of existing successes and applies innovative ways to meet new challenges. The changes have already begun at NOS. New projects involving various combinations of expertise have been initiated, and work is under way to further the goals and objectives outlined in this plan.

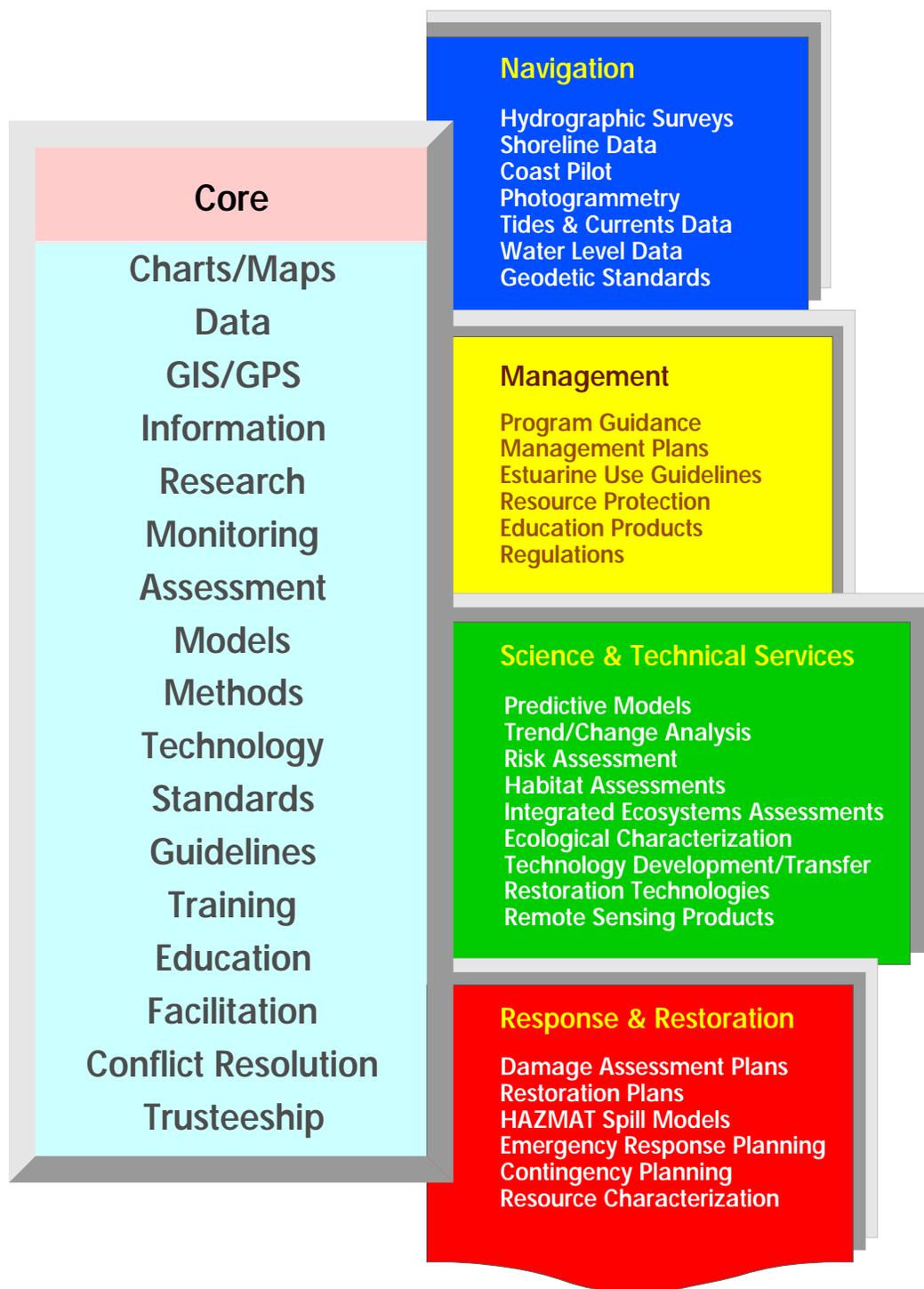
The Opportunity

NOS has an unprecedented opportunity to create an organization that significantly promotes a coastal stewardship ethic throughout the nation's coastal areas and within the changing global environment. NOS will make great strides by capitalizing on its unique capabilities, developing and applying sound science for innovative management techniques, improving existing products and services, and developing new ones.

Leadership	NOS has the opportunity to provide national and international leadership in addressing coastal environmental problems. NOS will enhance its leadership position through specific efforts that focus on predictive science, integrated coastal management, effective response and restoration, and improved navigation services. NOS will foster new scientific understanding and technologies, improve the connection between science and management, and ensure that its products and services are useful to the coastal community.
Partnerships	NOS will expand and strengthen stewardship linkages among local, state, and federal programs, academic institutions, and others in the public and private sectors, including international partners. Improving these partnerships will enhance NOS's ability to address its mission.
Innovation	NOS will employ innovation to improve government service, digital applications, and navigation products. NOS will expand digital processing and applications in many aspects of its mapping, charting, and data products, and provide a more comprehensive set of products and services to the transportation industry. NOS capabilities will be enhanced by advanced cumulative impact models, state-of-the-art science and technologies for ecosystem-level management, improved forecast models for real-time navigation services and spill response, and new remote sensing applications.
Coastal and Great Lakes Science	NOS will implement strong, integrated coastal research, monitoring and assessment programs focused on the cumulative effects of human activities and supported by a cadre of scientific experts. This will increase the relevance and credibility of NOS's coastal stewardship mission, as well as promote the needs of its user community by making coastal science more accessible to decisionmakers at all levels.
Impact on Economy and Environment	NOS will work to achieve a sustainable balance between environmental protection and economic activities, improve efforts to preserve, protect and manage sensitive coastal and marine habitats, and implement beneficial and cost-effective solutions to coastal problems.
Teachers and Models	As a leader in coastal stewardship, NOS will engage a broader community of users on an ongoing basis, keeping them informed of its contributions through new programs, activities, products, and services.
Customer Service	As part of its new mission, NOS will improve and customize products and services to better serve existing and new customers.

Responding to the Challenges: NOS Products & Services

Examples



The “core set” of products and services above characterizes the work of NOS. This core set, together with the specific examples, provide guidance to our customers as to what NOS is “in business” to achieve.

Products and Services

Core Products and Services

Research, Assessments, and Monitoring lie on the continuum along which scientific information is developed and transferred to resource users, managers, regulators, and the scientific community. These activities lead to a wide array of products and services including reports, news articles, data bases, maps and charts, consulting expertise, and Internet-accessible information.

Models can be products developed for others, or predictive tools used internally as part of a service performed by an NOS program.

Technology can fall into the category of product or service. It may include the development of information services to ensure the distribution of NOS information to the widest possible audience, or the development of new techniques for conducting research, monitoring, and assessment activities.

Facilitation, Training, and Education are services that provide assistance and guidance to others. A wide variety of outputs are produced from these services.

Trusteeship is a responsibility of the agency to provide oversight and act on behalf of the public to protect and restore natural resources.

Like any large organization, be it public or private, NOS performs a number of activities designed to achieve its organizational goals and objectives. A “products and services” framework enables an organization to chart its progress in meeting its objectives. Most importantly, such a framework provides direct feedback from the organization’s clientele.

A “product” is a tangible output (e.g., manual, CD-ROM, nautical chart) that is handed off to a client. A “service” indicates that work is done for others, i.e., NOS participates in the co-development or delivery of an outcome or output (e.g., scientific advice and support, coordination, training, conflict resolution, scientific publications and reports). The service itself may not result in a tangible product, but it is targeted to produce a tangible result.

As NOS recognizes new opportunities to collaborate with its partners, it is certain to increase the demand for its products and services. These services must benefit the agency’s mission as well as its clientele. It is important for the work to influence management decisions so that the benefits of our coastal stewardship mission are maximized.

- ❑ **Navigation.** Navigation provides many products (e.g., charts, tides data, positioning data) essential to supporting maritime and coastal management activities. Additionally, the geodesy program has developed and continues to evolve the national reference system for positioning data. NOS anticipates changing demands and technologies, and develops innovative products and services to meet emerging needs.
- ❑ **Management.** Coastal managers rely on many NOS products and services to enhance their decision-making. Management also supports activities that generate NOS products and services at the federal, state, regional, and local levels. Grants are the mechanism used to transfer the funds that states and sites need to conduct partnership activities. Facilitation services provided by NOS assist the partners in designing and implementing a problem-solving framework to address coastal resource management concerns.
- ❑ **Science.** NOS will set its science priorities to meet a variety of users’ needs. As a primary generator of scientific data, assessments and information, NOS will provide the management communities with an improved basis for decision-making, including an improved understanding of how coastal systems work, advanced forecast and predictive capabilities, and integration of data for assessments. NOS will develop and maintain a staff of scientific and technical experts who can work with coastal managers and other stakeholders to offer technical assistance and advice on making scientifically credible decisions, to improve their understanding of environmental change, and for planning and implementing research, monitoring, and assessment activities.
- ❑ **Response.** Many NOS products and services are required to respond to spill events and hazardous waste sites in order to mitigate and reverse their impact on coastal resources. From tides and tidal currents to living resources, data and real-time information play an important role in response, risk mitigation, and damage assessment and restoration activities (e.g., prediction, modeling).

Community of Coastal Stewards

NOS has the opportunity to enhance existing partnerships and establish new ones, and to be the catalyst for anticipating and responding to regional and national needs.

- **General Public**
- **Landowners**
- **State Government**
- **Local Government**
- **Regional Authorities**
- **Private Sector**
- **Academia**
- **Nongovernmental Organizations (NGOs)**
- **Other NOAA Offices**
- **Other Federal Agencies**

Customers ————— **Stakeholders** ————— **Partners**

The level of participation/collaboration increases between NOS, its user community and the Nation's taxpayers, from customers to stakeholders to partners.

The Coastal Stewardship Community

Partners: *Those with whom we collaborate, cooperate, coordinate, and jointly develop and deliver products and services.*

Stakeholders: *Those with an interest or stake in our activities; those who influence or have an impact on our work; those who participate in coordinated, cooperative functions.*

Customers: *Those who need and use our products and services and to whom we are ultimately accountable.*

User Community

A fundamental “tenet” of the redefined NOS is to focus on working more directly with *all* of the Nation’s coastal stewards to address evolving problems and issues facing the coastal environment. This approach challenges us to listen more, and to expand our products and services for, a larger user community. Active collaboration with federal, state, and local institutions, the public and private sectors, and the international community, will amplify the impact of NOS programs, and will achieve more effective coastal and ocean management. NOS must actively seek these opportunities in coastal stewardship.

Customer Service

A principal focus of NOS’s work has always been to provide products and services to the Nation. An important part of our mission will be to identify the ways in which our current products and services might be improved or customized to better serve coastal stewards and to attract new clients. Our products, services, and delivery systems will be scrutinized to ensure and improve quality, efficiency, timeliness, and relevance.

Partnerships

To promote a coastal stewardship ethic, NOS must leverage its technical expertise to engage others in stewardship activities. Thus, establishing new public, private-sector, and international partnerships is high on the agenda. Some of these partnership activities will directly involve NOS personnel and resources, and in areas where NOS has no direct involvement, we will work aggressively to expand and strengthen stewardship linkages among federal, state, and local programs.

Federal/State/Local/Regional Authorities. Partnerships are already in place between NOS and many federal, state, and local agencies, as well as regional and international institutions. Technical assistance and technology transfer are key NOS services that empower these entities to more effectively and efficiently manage the coastal resources in their care.

Other Institutions/Private Industry. Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and private industry are frequent partners with NOS. We must strengthen and build on these alliances to maximize the nationwide usefulness of NOS products and services.

Academia. Strong ties to academia will enhance the breadth and rigor of NOS’s science and technology programs. NOS must capitalize on partnership opportunities to conduct and support science activities that increase our understanding of coastal ecosystems, the magnitude and extent of human impacts on them, and the linkages between the environment and the economy.

General Public. There is a strong need to increase the NOS presence in coastal communities by establishing active partnerships with public stakeholders in planning and decision-making.

NOS has a Sound Tradition . . .



*NOS is a leader, a facilitator, a provider, an educator . . .
NOS responds to problems, manages coastal areas,
conducts science and research, and develops a
wide range of products and services, including
the Nation's nautical charts.*



The Challenge

Our success as the leader in coastal stewardship rests on our abilities to positively influence human behavior, adapt to changing conditions, and capitalize on emerging opportunities.

The clear challenge for NOS is to promote coastal stewardship and exercise national leadership in coastal management, science, and technical applications, and to ensure that current NOS products and services evolve and expand in their usefulness to the Nation. In three specific areas—habitat, natural disasters, and climate change—NOS will expand its partnership efforts while establishing a thematic and organizational framework for the many NOAA activities in these areas.

Such a leadership role requires NOS to make changes in its programmatic strategy and organization. As part of this new mission, NOS has pledged to expand its user community, so that its products and services are available and more useful to a wider audience. This expansion will require realignment and programmatic “cross-cutting” to make the most of synergies among operating units.

To meet the challenge, NOS will:

- Examine opportunities for major new products and services for our fellow stewards;
- Maintain and strengthen the scientific basis for NOS activities;
- Improve on the science-based tools that managers need for decision-making;
- Strengthen its capabilities to protect and restore coastal environments;
- Participate in new national and international initiatives; and
- Become a more vocal advocate for its own programs.

To meet this challenge, we must overcome the tendency to revert to a “business as usual” attitude rather than to seek creative solutions. We must continue to foster the synergies that bind NOS programs together, as well as create opportunities for expansion. At the same time, we must be careful not to neglect our core mission. Setting priorities will be critical to maximize our success.

This plan provides the framework with which to establish a new planning process within our organization. This process will focus on strengthening the connections between NOAA’s strategic and operational planning efforts, budget formulation, and budget execution. It will also engage us in legislative activities to ensure the success of NOS programs. Program and staff offices will develop their own strategic plans, elaborating on the goals, objectives, and opportunities identified herein as they relate to their perspective responsibilities. Annual Operating Plans specific to each office will contain operational details (e.g., budget, staffing, other resource requirements).



August 1998
